

CHRISTMAS 1959 NEW YEAR 1960

As all preachers do at Christmas I was meditating on the gift of the Christ child. One thing struck me forcibly which I found both in the story of the angel's announcement to Mary as in his announcement to Zacharias, and that was the fear which the angel's announcement caused. Mary was afraid when she heard of the gift which God had given her, and so was Zacharias when he heard of the gift that God had given him. Why were they afraid? As I was looking out the answer to this question, I said to myself, Suppose on Christmas day the angel should appear in my church and tell all of us gathered there, 'I have brought each of you a gift of the same gift. When you go home at the end of this Christmas Service, you will find the Christ at home. He will live with you always'—I was sure that at least for myself I should have been sorely afraid.

Every gift, if it is to be enjoyed, involves some sacrifice. If someone should present me with a saree, her first reaction would be that I need a blouse to match this saree. I would need to spend money on a blouse that I would otherwise have spent on something else. If someone should present me with a car, I would put me into great difficulty. There is no room where I live to build a garage, so I would have to find another house. If someone should present any of you with an elephant it

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Two refugee children in Pakistan—two of ten million.

As Christmas is observed around the world, the story of "no room in the inn" brings us up short before the fact that one in four of the world's 45 million postwar refugees is a child. An expert on refugees remarked of the nearly one million homeless Arabs, "I suppose the main difference between the Bethlehem of the Nativity and the Bethlehem of today is that today there is not even room in the stable."

World Youth News

(Japan)—Volunteer work camps which sprang up spontaneously were one of the most amazing things to develop in the wake of the disastrous Typhoon Vera, according to a Japanese youth worker.

"We never sent out a single letter nor made any special appeal yet an amazing thing happened," says Pastor Mishido, secretary of the youth committee of the United Church of Christ in Japan. "By the time I arrived at Nagoya, students from Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe areas had rushed there carrying rucksacks on their backs and holding their shovels and picks which they had brought from their own homes. They came voluntarily without being asked."

Typhoon casualties were the worst in Japan's history "but the number of Christian students who rushed voluntarily to the scene, motivated purely by love of their fellow man was also the 'most' in our Christian history." Within a ten day period, twenty-two work camps were organized by local churches in the Nagoya area. In all 3,000 Christian students participated without having been asked or appealed to.

Youth Volunteers

(Spittal, Austria)—The possibility of a stepped-up program of recruitment of youth volunteers for WCC refugee aid work in Austria and other countries will be studied by the World Council.

WCC Youth Department staff will hold a consultation early in 1960 to discuss the use of youth volunteers. At present the program, started in response to the needs of Hungarian refugees following the 1956 "October revolution," is operating only in Austria where about 100 volunteers from 10 countries have served during the last two-and-a-half years.

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"You see how they build their sand castles. They love to because it is so easy to destroy them and start all over again. Many refugees would like to do that with their lives—to build again. But it is too late. There is time only for the children."

Miss Luise Katzensteiner spoke these words at The Farm, Kotschachsdorf, Badgastein, Austria. Around her 50 refugee children play each day at the World Council of Churches' peaceful home high in the beautiful Austrian countryside.

In July, 1958, The Farm was rented for a three-months experimental period. So many refugee children were in need of special care. Sometimes the mother was having another baby and there was no one to look after them. Sometimes it was sheer neglect, illness of one or both parents or cruelty.

Is there any change when children leave the healthy life of The Farm to return to the camps? Miss Katzensteiner does not hesitate in her reply: "You see, it is the children who suffer most."

"When they come here from the camps, they stand out beside the others. They are nervous, crowd-conscious and quite unable to mix in a happy way with their playmates. It is possible to help a camp life to completely change a child.

"Then some of them have to return to the camps. Just as they were before. They go back to the camps. So often they cry. It is this which grieves me."

Youth workers from around the world staff the children's home on a voluntary basis. They give up sometimes as much as three to four months of their time to stay with the young people to play with them, to wash them and to keep them happy.

Pictured washing two contented little boys are Eunice Bocholz, 21-year-old student, of New Haven, Conn.

JAPANESE PROTESTANTS OBSERVE CENTENNIAL

Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, has called upon the churches to take "a common stand against isolationism and self-centered confessionalism."

"The Church must demonstrate that Christ actually overcomes the walls of separation, class, nation, race, and denomination," he declared. "This must manifest itself in our willingness to have fellowship across all national, racial, and ideological frontiers."

Dr. Visser 't Hooft addressed a mass meeting in Tokyo, Japan, in connection with a "Centennial Assembly Week" (November 1-8), marking the 100th anniversary of Protestantism in Japan.

The World Council leader said that in Protestant history there has been "too exclusive emphasis on the individual call and not enough on our common calling. No individual church can fulfill the whole calling by itself," he declared. "We need each other to understand the dimensions of the call. We need mutual correction by each other in order to realize our own shortcomings and unfaithfulness."



Dr. Visser 't Hooft addressed a "mass meeting of Christian witness" held in connection with the recent celebration of the 100th anniversary of Protestantism in Japan. With him is interpreter, Dr. Tadahiro Yasumura.

"The deepest motive of the ecumenical movement is this break through to the awareness of our common calling by God," he said. "It could not have lived through the crises of our time, if it were merely animated by human motives. Its real dynamic is in the sense of shame and repentance because the churches have not lived up to the image which the New Testament gives of the Church and the Body of Christ and the people of God."

The address preceded a worship service in which representatives of Protestant churches around the world joined with Japanese leaders in marking the anniversary. Following the service were official ceremonies commemorating the arrival in 1859 of Episcopal, Dutch Reformed, and Presbyterian missionaries in Japan.

New "Old Believers"

A new colony of Old Believers, colorful descendants of the conservative members of the Russian Orthodox Church who broke away in the 17th century, has been "discovered" in the heart of Asia Minor.

A community of about 1,000 persons is living in Islamic Turkey, working as fishermen along the Nicea Lake—the area in which the Nicene Creed, used or accepted by most Christians, was drawn up in the early centuries of the Christian Church.

First contact with the community was made last month after a visiting card belonging to Dr. Edgar H. S. Chandler, director of the World Council of Churches' Service to Refugees, was mailed by a member of the Old Believers' colony in Brazil to a relative in the Turkish community.

A senior member of the community, card in hand, made the four-hour trip to the WCC field office in Istanbul to announce that his community "would like to go to Brazil, too."

The 500-member agricultural community in Brazil, all of whose members had been refugees in Hong Kong, was established last year by the World Council of Churches.

Mrs. A. E. A. Went-van der Vring, WCC representative in Turkey, described the visit as "the surprise of my life. No one had any idea there were any strong groups of Christians in Asia Minor." She said she would visit the community soon to explore the possibility of resettlement.

HAPPY NEW YEAR—FIFTY TIMES

Ecumenical Press Service is a weekly digest of news of the Church around the world. Correspondents from Bangkok to Berlin, New South Wales to New York, gather the material for this comprehensive, authoritative news service, edited in Geneva, Switzerland.

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The U.S. Conference for the World Council of Churches plans to move to the new Interchurch Center, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N.Y., around February 1960.

The WCC is one of the smaller tenants in the new building which includes the National Council of Churches, the Methodist and Presbyterian mission boards, the Reformed Church in America, and others. Visiting offices are on the fourth floor.

NETHERLANDS: Protestant and Roman Catholics in the university town of Nimwegen cooperated in sponsoring a month-long program on religion and the arts during November.

Clergy and laity of both confessions presented lectures on sculpture in the church, church music, and religious drama. A special series of evening meetings designed to stimulate interest in the Roman Catholic and Reformed liturgies included lectures, choral music and drama, and the singing of both Roman Catholic and Protestant hymns.

A spokesman for the sponsoring committee said the program was organized because "too often Roman Catholics and Protestants are faced by many of the same questions. In Holland we live side by side and our concern is to facilitate contact between the two churches in order to promote real understanding."

World Council of Churches

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at Cooperstown, N.Y., WCC president Archbishop Iakovos, a baseball fan, took advantage of his visit to the Episcopal House of Bishops and went to the Baseball Hall of Fame.



UNITED STATES: Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America has reaffirmed the willingness of the Orthodox Church to hold "ecumenical dialogues" with the Roman Catholic Church, if such dialogues have as their aim the eventual inclusion of Protestants.

At the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Cooperstown, N.Y., Archbishop Iakovos emphasized the readiness of his church to engage in conversations with all churches including the Roman Catholic, "but never for bilateral unity."

"The union of all Christians is what God demands, not the formation of bilateral fronts of conventional unity. It is not only God that demands this from us, but all the people whom we say we serve but whom in reality we divide," he said.

GERMANY: Dr. Walter Freytag, chairman of the German Evangelical Mission Council, died suddenly of a heart attack on October 24, while in Heidelberg to attend meetings of the German ecumenical study committee. He was 60.

A long an ardent advocate of the ecumenical movement, Dr. Freytag was vice-president of the International Missionary Council and from 1954 had served as chairman of the Division of Studies of the World Council of Churches. He was Professor of Missions at the Theological Faculty of Hamburg.

World Refugee News and Notes

Dr. Elfan Rees of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs toured the West Coast from Dec. 8 to 11 speaking in behalf of World Refugee Year. A television program produced by actress Marsha Hunt was aired on Dec. 9 in the Los Angeles area. The show, starring Hollywood personalities, included an address by Dr. Rees and clips from "Like Paradise," the film on Hong Kong refugees produced by the British Council of Churches.

In San Francisco 70 organizations co-sponsored a meeting on Human Rights Day, Dec. 10. Dr. Rees concluded his West Coast tour with a speech in Portland, Oregon.

SPECIAL REFUGEE YEAR OFFER: The World Council of Churches will send 100 copies of the special World Refugee Year issue of the *Courier* and two World Refugee Year posters for only \$1.

Niles on Christmas

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would ruin your life . . . Of course, my wife can present the saree to someone else, I can give away the motor-car, you can refuse to accept the elephant. But what can we do with Jesus Christ? We can crucify Him. That is what they did in Jerusalem.

"This anxiety and fear which Christmas brings is always with us: for it is repeated every time that we receive a gift from God and never more so than when we receive the calling to be preachers. 'I will make Thy name known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them.' This promise of Jesus is the burden of our calling, and it is a gift which does entail its own sacrifice if we are to make it ours . . . But we cannot end our meditation here, for not even on the success of our sacrifice does anything depend. Everything depends on Him to whom our every obedience belongs and to whom at the last we must commit it."

D. T. NILES

The Preacher's Calling to Be Servant
Harper and Brothers, New York

Five WCC Staff Members Visit Churches in Russia

A five-member delegation from the World Council of Churches left Geneva, Switzerland, Dec. 1 for a three-and-a-half week visit in Russia as guests of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, New York and Philadelphia, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, is the only American to make the trip. He is an associate general secretary of the World Council of Churches and dean of the Graduate School of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

Purpose of the visit was to continue the "get acquainted" process, which got under way when two representatives of the Patriarchate spent four weeks visiting the World Council's headquarters in Geneva.

The delegation will be the first "fully international, ecumenical" group of church leaders ever to visit the USSR. Members of the group come from Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Anglican, and Orthodox churches and from the Netherlands, U.S.A., Burma, Britain, and Greece. The delegation was headed by Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, WCC general secretary.

The delegation had talks with leaders of the Lutheran, Baptist, and Armenian churches in the Soviet Union during the visit. The itinerary started with a four-day visit in Moscow and included a four-day visit in Soviet Armenia and shorter stop-overs in Riga, Kiev, and Leningrad. During the Moscow visit the delegation spent one day visiting the Russian Orthodox Church's monastery and theological college at Zagorsk, forty miles outside the city.

Members of the delegation, in addition to Dr. Visser 't Hooft and Dr. Nolde, were: the Rev. Francis House, WCC associate general secretary, British, a priest of the Church of England; Dr. Nick Nissiotis, assistant director of the WCC's Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, Greek, a member of the Greek Orthodox Church; and U Kyaw Than, Rangoon, Burma, Baptist layman, administrative secretary of the East Asian Christian Conference. Mr. Alexandre de Weymarn, a research officer in the WCC's general secretariat, accompanied the delegation as interpreter.



U Kyaw Than, East Asia Christian Conference, examines his sheepskin lined coat before embarking for Russia. His home is warm Rangoon, Burma.

In June, Archpriest Vitaly M. Borovoy, Vilna, a lecturer in early church history at the Leningrad Theological Academy, and Mr. Victor S. Alexeev, a day secretary in the Moscow Patriarchate's office for inter-church relations, visited the World Council. Later they attended as observers the meeting of the World Council Central Committee on the Island of Rhodes, August.

HONG KONG: Plans for a four-week ecumenical course for 45 Asian laity and youth have been announced by the East Asia Christian Conference. The course, the first of its kind, will be held under EACC auspices, is scheduled from December 28 to January 24, in Hong Kong. The course will seek to provide Christian instruction, study and discussion, and the pooling of information about work being done by churches among the laity and youth in each country represented. There will be special weekend lectures by lawyers, doctors, or youth workers from Hong Kong and work camp projects as a refugee service agency.